

Tom, I've gotten a friendly note from Elizabeth Overby who says she will write more formally when one of the other staff people comes back from vacation. S.

THINGS TO BE READ (IF POSSIBLE) BEFORE THE OCTOBER 9-11 MEETING
OF THE TEMPORARY NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF N.A.M.

[NAM]

FIRST OF ALL: The meeting October 9-11 will be held in the basement of the United Electrical Workers union hall at 37 South Ashland Avenue on the near West side of Chicago. The first meeting will begin promptly at 9:30 AM Saturday October 9. Tentatively, we envision dividing our time this way:

- Saturday AM What programmatic areas should we emphasize, that is, should we be sure to have workshops in at the Thanksgiving conference? Who should take responsibility for seeing that these workshops happen?
- Saturday PM What should this committee recommend to the Thanksgiving conference as national NAM programs? What are the next steps in refining and testing these programs?
- Sunday AM What should be the structure of NAM? right now? later on? Should there be a June conference?
- Sunday PM What needs to be done in preparation for the Thanksgiving conference? What should its agenda be? Who should be responsible for publicity, fund-raising? Who should be invited and how?
- Monday Remaining business

Child care will be provided. People from out of town who don't have a place to stay should contact Matt Piers (No 7 4159), Alice and Staughton Lynd (228 5077), or Paul and Heather Booth (538 3063).

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TRAVELER'S REPORTS

CHIP MARSHALL

September 27, 1971

Madison

Activity in Madison is slow. The campus and "hip" movements are in a state of disarray, with the YSA/SMC seeming to be the only well organized group. The women's movement is also fragmented, with the YSA/SMC group being the only cohesive force. A number of independent women will be attempting to draw together a new grouping this fall. Many former campus radicals have become active in the co-op movement which is huge and usually caters to other students, although the food co-op serves a cross-section of the town. The TA union, formerly very strong, is in the process of reorganization, with radicals in the leadership but a membership which wants the union to deal with narrow concerns.

Off campus activity is somewhat more encouraging. There is a very active GI movement (which has taken over the local VFW). The tenants union is also doing good work, mostly with poverty groups. They have conducted a wide variety of rent strikes, suits, etc. and are striving for ways to draw connections between housing and other issues. The Wisconsin Alliance is active in a number of areas: research and education, strike support, consumer work, and developing a farm program. The Alliance is a fairly small group--about 20--and they seem to be factionalized, but most of the people seem determined to do some sort of community work and are committed to a long haul. There is also a factory worker directed newspaper We the People which has been going for several months and which has gotten good support from some working people, particularly at the Oscar Mayer plant. One of the most encouraging projects is WIND, an independent news service for the midwest which is (unlike LNS) growing and also (unlike LNS) very interested in relating to working people.

The reaction to NAM was generally open. WIND has agreed to circulate the document to its subscribers and Griff Ellison of the Vets is going to do the same for his GI contacts around the country. People in the tenants union and TA union were also quite sympathetic, agreed to send people to the conference as well as help in development of some workshops. I am hopeful that we will also be able to develop a working relationship with the Alliance and We the People. The people I spoke with in each group were interested but also wondered what being part of NAM would mean for them as existing groups.

The questions people seemed to have centered around two areas: the people doing community organizing wondered if there were enough of a community base for something like NAM to take hold, and the student activists felt that the paper failed to take into account a number of the critiques against elitism, leadership, etc. that were raised by the women's and gay movement.

Minneapolis/St. Paul

The twin cities movement is also fragmented, but seems much closer to pulling together a city-wide movement around broad concerns than Madison. I spoke with several radical professors and the TA

group ASTA at U. of Minnesota, but by and large the great majority of activity is off the campus. The city still seems quite concerned with the war. The Honeywell project (anti-militarism) has begun again. They are planning a corporate war crimes tribunal and I discussed the possibility of similar sorts of teach-ins around the country also bringing in the general question of the economy. Honeywell people seemed favorable to this idea and to NAM in general. The women's movement seems to be most active in the area of health and they thought NAM would serve a useful function if it could provide cross-city communication. They were very concerned with the fact that the free health movement wasn't seeming to broaden its analysis and was in danger of becoming reformist. At the same time they didn't feel that groups like MCHR were really helping them much. (I was surprised that the general reaction to MCHR in all the cities I visited seemed to be that it was a professionally organized group with little concern for active base-building. This wasn't what I had thought but since I really don't know much I couldn't say too much one way or the other.)

The community work is varied. I met with people from Council for Corporate Responsibility which is doing some good work and seems to be divided between people who favor people's capitalism and those who want socialism. Their kind of research is valuable in any event. Doug Marvy and some others are also into doing research which can then be used by community groups. There is a growing protest movement in the large model cities area and radicals and liberals have formed a group called Residents Unite which has had a lot of success developing a program around taxes, health, education and getting support from the community (a number of them were elected to the model cities board recently).

There is a fairly extensive alternative media set-up. A radical theatre is functioning, as is the underground paper 100 Flowers which is aimed at the hip community but is pretty non-freaky. Unfortunately, North Country Press, the working class paper, has folded but most of the people are staying in the community to organize and some are now helping with Changes, a good radical magazine, which is going strong. There are also a number of co-ops and an experimental university. Both have radicals in them who were favorable to NAM and who are anxious that the kind of activity they are into doesn't become an end in itself.

I had three group meetings in Minneapolis/St. Paul and the response was very encouraging. The people involved in anti-war work were most favorable to NAM and no one seemed hostile, the main question being whether or not we could really develop a movement that would relate to people whose background was not the student movement.

Milwaukee

Milwaukee's movement is quite different than most. By far the most activity seems to be located away from the campus. There is a very large poverty program network with radicals scattered throughout. Some of the best are the Sweat University project (a program for unemployed people) and the Concerned Consumers League which is a very action-oriented consumer protection group organized by radicals. The Peace Movement centers around the Peace Action Council which does a good deal of education and outreach about the war and is now branching into ecology. The hip community is fairly well organized with active

Yippie and Mayday groups (the names here may be misleading as everyone in Milwaukee movement seems interested in relating to working people).

The main question with Milwaukee people was what can NAM do for the project I'm involved with. The people in this city are very practical. Most of them are intending to stay and they don't want to involve themselves in something which is going to conflict with their ongoing efforts. If NAM can provide them a larger context and the communication of good ideas most people in Milwaukee will welcome it.

Summary

There are several questions and recommendations I have after the past few weeks of travel.

1. Despite the fact that we are concerned with building a mass movement we fail to reflect that in our literature. While it is important to deal with a number of vital theoretical questions, I found that the NAM document was extremely esoteric to people who hadn't been actively involved in the movement of the past few years. I think two things can be done. First, we need a NAM statement which is mass in character. Someone should be empowered to write it at the October 9-10-11 meeting. I also think that we should encourage a variety of articles on concrete projects (CAP, Honeywell, Sweat University) in the newspaper.

2. I think we must think in very flexible organizational terms. It became obvious to me that NAM will and should mean different things to different people in terms of commitment. People in the peace movement, student movement, etc. will probably be able to devote more time than people in communities. Also people in day-to-day projects will become attached to NAM as it helps them in their daily work. The problem will be keeping one group or one outlook from predominating. To this end I suggest several things. First, that we make it clear that NAM will be an organization which could and should have a number of chapters per city. This would allow people from different backgrounds and with different concerns to function. At the same time we have to recognize the limitations of the city as an organizational unit. In addition to encouraging city-wide developments we should also encourage horizontal organization around interest (in other words people working in housing in Chicago linking with tenant people in Minneapolis). To this end, I think we should initiate task forces in all major areas of concern which would begin to do education, communication and action work. The tenants people in Madison suggested that at some point NAM might want to call together special interest conferences (a national meeting on taxes for example).

MICHAEL LERNER

September 27, 1971

This report will be divided into two parts: first, a specific report of conversations and meetings that I had, and second, a more general discussion of outstanding issues and how I think we should relate to them.

On September 14 I met with Harry Magdof, Paul Sweezy and Harry Braverman of Monthly Review. They volunteered to put an ad in MR announcing our conference, but refused a request to publish our revised document on the grounds that it would appear to be an endorsement, since they never published similar documents. They also suggested several names of people whom I should talk to. One of them, Burt Cochran, I followed up on a few days later, and several others have been sent copies of the document. The MR crew seemed interested in helping on specific assignments if we could come up with some, and showed some interest in having at least one of them at the November conference.

Burt Cochran was editor of the American Socialist in the 50's and by all accounts has a wealth of knowledge about the socialist movement's history. I asked him to write about the connection between his experience and what he thought we should do now, or how we should structure NAM, and he refused for unspecified reasons, while simultaneously saying that he was very interested in NAM and would be willing to help if we would suggest some other way. In particular, I had the sense that he would be happy to come to our conference to participate in a discussion of the history of the past and its lessons, or possibly even to the October meeting, if we asked him. He stressed the importance of the development of cadre in the creation of any mass form. The early Socialist Party, he pointed out, was the product of two previously existing socialist groups with a well defined constituency, so its formation was not tremendously relevant to some of the problems we would face coming out of nothing. Equally important, the early SP was closely connected with an existing socialist community: socialism was exceedingly popular amongst the immigrant minority communities, particularly the Jewish and German immigrants, and it was out of that milieu that the SP got some of its early strength and acceptability. We should have no illusions about an early acceptance by the labor movement. In fact, in many respects we would be contending against the political hegemony of the labor leaders and if we don't realize that probably will. It would be crucial to have a program that significantly distinguishes NAM from the rest of the labor movement, which is not very easy if we still want to be talking to large numbers of people. Cochran doubts that the wage/price issue is a good one for doing this, because even if they don't follow up on it programatically, the labor leaders are making several of the correct political points. Possibly a better demand would be to mount a campaign for a rollback of prices stressing the unfair present distribution of wealth. Cochran also suggested the extreme importance of some modest successes in the first few years of our existence if we were ever to have any chance of lasting. He emphasized the importance of getting established on the American scene through activities, publicity, etc. that would make us a public known phenomenon, because it was only in that way that working people would ever hear about us and be willing to take us seriously, and that that would be the way to transcend our initial constituency and become more truly rooted in the working class.

On Thursday, September 16, I went to the Law Center for Constitutional Rights and spoke to several people about New American Movement, including Linda Huger and William Kunstler. There was interest, but since no one had read the new version of the pamphlet, discussion was limited.

That evening we had a meeting of people who had written to us from New York. There were approximately fifteen people in attendance, most of them people who had not been involved in any movement activity for the past few months for similar reasons to those we stated in our criticisms of the movement in the pamphlet. Jerry Coffin, who works with War Resisters League and who had volunteered to be our New York contact, expressed some considerable scepticism that it could ever really happen. Building the New American Movement will take such great energy and I just don't know if I have the energy. But by the end of the meeting Coffin is not so sure, because there are many people at the meeting who obviously do have enough energy to build, and Coffin is turned on. Someone says that we shouldn't set priorities on programs, because there is no one most important thing to do. What is most important to do is not a logical or political decision anyway, it's basically a personal, psychological decision. So NAM should be a clearing house. Steve Anderson responds by saying there are enough clearing houses. We need something more than that for our local organizing projects, something that ties up our immediate project with something that goes beyond it on a national scale. I was really turned on by the document and think it is a very good place to start. Cicily Nichols, who worked with the squatters in New York, points up how her local organizing work would have been greatly advanced if it could have been related to the economic and historical programs of NAM. Judy Schub and Evelyn Frankford suggest that the subway fare increase might be a way of relating New York's problems to the larger economic problems in the country. Lynn Shatzkin says that there are loads of things to do, but who would do them when there are so few people left, many are tired, and those that are not are already very involved in their own projects which they don't want to give up. Michael Uhl from the Citizen's Commission of Inquiry responds by pointing to the many veterans who are being turned on to a radical analysis, who do not primarily want to do political activity simply in terms of their military experience, and who have no place to go. Many of them will provide energy for NAM. So too, says one of the women, will women from the women's movement who no longer find any organizational way of relating to the women's movement that satisfies them. Steven Anderson suggests that we must widely publicize the November conference. I was part of an early Weinstein effort to bring people together a few years ago and it got no place. A crucial reason that it fell apart was that everything factionalized on small issues very quickly because nobody thought that what they were involved in was particularly significant or historically important, hence there was nothing to preserve, so people could indulge in all of their sectarianism without fear that it really mattered that sectarianism could be destructive. An event that is seen to be a public historical event will not have this pitfall and can be constructed so that people see the need for self-discipline. Lynn regrets that PL has been excluded and Evelyn says that even if that particular exclusion was necessary, the real question facing us is to construct a conference in which PL is irrelevant. What should the New York chapter do? Jerry Coffin says it should be built around a New York activity. Steve Anderson says no, we should work on perfecting the organization; concrete actions should be more in the future; others say that the two

will go together. Everyone agrees that getting the word out is a very important first task. They think that an ad in Monthly Review talking about the conference is a good idea, and other places as well. And they will spread the word through word of mouth.

For the next several days I have a series of conversations with people. Murray Kempton likes it very much, wants to work out some relationship but is very busy writing a book on the Panther 21 trial and hence can't do it now. For the time being, we can use his name in any way we want in connection with the document. Norm Fruchter says he is frankly opposed to what we are doing. The kinds of national organizations that are meaningful are those that are based on constituencies. National constituencies like MCHR and Lawyer's Guild would be basic building blocks of a new national organization that would basically be part of a new national coalition. Crucial to this development is the formation of a new student movement, though I don't see how this will emerge, says Fruchter. NAM is a kind of a brokerage house--like the old movement heavies. We need single issue organizations that will eventually come together, like the single issue organizations in Vietnam that are the units of the NLF. Fruchter is writing a book on where we've been and where we go from here. He feels that the crucial mistake of SDS, which NAM is repeating even worse, is to cast our political form into a parliamentary form with all the trappings of these procedures which are so foreign to most of our normal life experience. He specifically rejects the interpretation of Rich Rothstein that the abandonment of representative forms was a cause of problems.

I spoke several times to a woman named Ellen Maslow who is a member of Up From Under collective. I requested a meeting with them at their convenience, but they decided that they were too busy to arrange it. They wish us well, and think that they might print news about our development, and Ellen gave me several women's names whom I should get into contact with. One of them, Pam Booth, was very interested by the document and wants to work on the NAM in some capacity. She had previously been one of the organizers of New York women's liberation union, Joan Bird Committee, etc., working as abortion counselor.

I went to the Guardian annual picnic and spoke there about the New American Movement. There was considerably good reception and some people took copies to circulate to their friends. One negative reaction: Carl Davidson said that he felt that what we really needed was a revolutionary party. That party would need a much fuller analysis of American society that told us exactly which forces could be moved and how. In addition, such a party must be multi-racial from the start, which Davidson believes is possible now. In fact, several revolutionary collectives had had a meeting the week before and had decided to set up a theoretical journal which would eventually lead in the direction of a party. This grouping apparently included many elements from RYM II. There were some people at the picnic who thought that the analysis, far from being too inadequate, was really too complete and that we needn't ask people to accept such a detailed analysis in order to join the New American Movement. Irving Beinin of the Guardian said he was very interested in the NAM and said that he intended to either write about NAM or excerpt part of our document. A similar criticism to Davidson's was voiced by Paul Buhle. The new left failed for basic reasons connected with its class composition and orientation, he said, and we need to have a much deeper analysis before anything starts again. The people starting this were involved

in SDS in early days and could not possibly be the group to get something basically new started--so NAM appears to be just a last desperate attempt by early SDSers to keep their thing together. Buhle is working on this much deeper analysis and will send us a copy when his first draft is ready. He is not interested in setting up a meeting of people in Boston area.

On Sunday, September 19, there was a meeting with the upper West Side chapter of NAM. Steve Max has drafted an initial statement and they are now working on a much longer development of an analysis of American society and how to move. This group, which pre-existed NAM by a few months, was much turned on by the document and sees the need for the kind of organization NAM would become. Many of them, however, strongly disagree with the projected scenario for how to begin the building of NAM, which they will undoubtedly discuss at the October meeting. The key difference is over the question of a national program to be discussed and adopted at the national conference. Several of them believe that we should not build the conference around a program, but around organizational questions and more long-range analysis. They fear that we are repeating the old new left problem of refusing to take the time to work out our politics with enough care and are rushing into actions. Instead we should take the development of cadre until June to be our first and major task and at that later point put forward a program based on shared assumptions that go deeper than the analysis in the NAM paper. The alternative would be a disaster: we will put forward a program that appeals to many people, and what is quite likely to happen is that they will get turned on to NAM and come to a meeting and want to join it. But what they will find is that we are not together, that structural and key theoretical questions have not been worked out. People will be induced to come into a room with no furniture. If we develop any tentative program, someone suggested, it should be brought just to the left rather than trying to generally recruit. Ordinary people, someone else suggested, do not want to come into an organization that is still in the midst of debate on fundamental political issues: they want to join an organization because it seems to have political answers and can tell them how to move. I found this argument persuasive as far as it went, but thought that there were countervailing reasons against their proposal: 1. I do not believe that an organization that starts out as a cadre form will ever become a mass form, because at no foreseeable point (certainly not in the first year) will people really think that there is a high enough level of agreement in the organization to warrant the switchover, given that this level of agreement is seen as necessary to start a mass form. But as a cadre form, it will appeal to the same old people, and many others will see that and not want to have anything to do with it--i.e. it will really become an organization by and for those who have been active in the past. 2. I do not believe that a program that was refined for the next half year would be substantially better than the one that will come out of November conference. What will make our programs qualitatively better is the input of lots of people who are not in the movement now but who would come into NAM if it seems to have programs that speak to their needs. Their input is crucial, and the sooner we make public an organization that really induces them to join, the sooner our programs will make more sense. As to the problem of political disunity, I think that the analysis put forward in the second pamphlet is enough of a basis of unity to begin with, and that further refinements should emerge basically around debates on programmatic alternatives. I put this position forward at that meeting. There were several articulate and extremely intelligent people at the meeting, some of

whose names I missed, but I particularly remember Margie Fields who is certain to play an important role in the development of that chapter.

On September 20, I met with people from the Village Voice and they seemed interested in the NAM. But when I asked them to develop a program around journalism or newspapers they seemed hesitant, not because of NAM but because of their lack of certainty about what they wanted to see in such a program. It was suggested that I write something about NAM for the Voice which I shall do, and Robin Reisig suggested that she would want to come to October meetings and participate from there.

On September 21, there was a meeting of about 20 people at the apartment of Marvin Surkin, a teacher at LaGuardia Community College. Unlike the other two meetings, at this meeting there was very little participation in the discussion--it was mostly question and answer. Most of the people in attendance were from the academic community and had apparently come to hear about what was happening without any particular interest in participating in anything themselves. Jim and Rina Garst said that they were amongst those with "tired blood" who just couldn't get into another venture. There were several people from New Jersey who seemed to be interested, including Joel Myron from Jersey City. One member of the ironbound collective of Newark named Allison Raphael has agreed to show the proposal around and discuss it with people that she is working with. She expressed concern that we seemed to have no programmatic ideas to deal with the people she is working with--young working class people who are increasingly relating to smack rather than to economic programs. She felt that the economic program would be basically irrelevant to her work with them. She appeared to be a very competent and intelligent organizer whose possible participation in NAM would be very important.

On September 22, I went to Philadelphia to meet with Andy Starr's group. Unfortunately, Andy had been very sick for the previous few days and the meeting had never really been planned or publicized. The few people who did come were mostly voyeurs with questions rather than people interested in making it work. Helena Sheehan made a long speech about how very well her local organizing projects were going (she started work in them about a month ago) and how there was no need for any national organization. There were three people from a group called the Movement for a New Society, which seems to have aims similar to NAM in many respects, and which is starting chapters around the country. Their main focus for the time being is anti-Pakistan organizing, and they mostly come out of the pacifist community. I urged them to come to the November conference with a developed proposal around foreign affairs and expressed a desire to work out some kind of joint activity if not merger between NAM and MNS if that becomes possible. Helena then piped in again with a speech on how she was not a worker or at least not an industrial worker and how she wanted to work only around things that directly effect her own oppression.

On September 25 we had the second meeting of the Thursday night group in New York. Nat Solomon had brought a number of his supporters from the People's Platform, distributed copies of the platform, and said that he would introduce the platform as part of the NAM program

at the national conference. He also said that he had spoken to two blacks who were leaders of a Transit Union insurgency, Joe Carnegie and John Houghton, and that they were interested in the NAM. They had asked him to convey the thought to us that we must be more explicit in our desire to base our movement on the working class, and they thought this could be a reality. Nat Solomon also suggested that we needed a better formula for making it possible for people who were members of existing radical-oriented groups to affiliate to the NAM. A representative of a union of the unemployed in New York, middle aged, said that we needed to say more about unemployment in our program. A woman who had been in attendance also on Tuesday night said that our failure to have some organizational matters worked out was an over-reaction to anti-elitism in the movement. The local chapters need more in the way of concrete suggestions for local discussion. We must also be more explicit in our desire to become a working class organization. We are facing a major crisis in unemployment in this country and we need a good analysis of what that will mean for the next few years. Evelyn Frankford said that we need to address the problem of the women's movement more explicitly. I feel unsure of how to relate to the fact that I want very badly for there to be an independent women's movement, but I know that this organization is not the place for that, and would oppose the development here of a women's caucus that served simply as a watchdog on chauvinism. Cicely Nichols suggested that we should consider schools as a priority area for the development of a program. This area is directly relevant to the women's movement and changes it in a way I want to see, because the women's movement has oriented primarily to single women so far. Here would be a way of being in NAM and yet really addressing the oppression of women. Terri Davis (a former worker at a GI coffee house called Oleo Strut in Texas): these issues effect women and so I wouldn't want them to be worked on by a men's organization. I left the movement for the independent women's movement and have now left the independent women's movement and know many other women who join me in wanting to be part of a mixed socialist organization. Judith Shapiro suggested that a women's caucus in NAM could make sense and wouldn't have to be just a watchdog on chauvinism. She said that women can work in a mixed organization. Pam Booth suggested a women's meeting of New York women into NAM, and it was held at her house the next Sunday afternoon. The women's discussion this Thursday evening lasted for about three quarters of an hour and was very helpful for the dynamic of the meeting, because it served to provide entrance into the discussion for some who had previously not talked much and also helped keep some of the overly-articulate men silent for a while. It was then decided to make this group into an official NAM chapter. Don Schoolman, a middle aged gentleman from Long Island, said that he didn't want to come to another meeting to simply talk about forming NAM since he wanted to get down to business and organize a chapter in Long Island. I came here because I agree with NAM--now I want to move. There was a long discussion about how to proceed: some people suggested breaking up into borough organizing committees, some suggested breaking up into programmatic task forces, some suggested breaking into local neighborhoods, and this discussion went on for an hour and dissipated many; who seemed to agree with a Dr. Joseph Knopf who finally said that the organizational structure should be decided by the national leadership and we should not waste time on it. Judy Schub said that organization structure was not the key question: I won't stay with NAM unless we get down to discussing

program soon. Judy Schub was elected convenor of the next week's meeting. Judy Hirschman said that she had been working with a group of hospital workers who were all very excited to hear about NAM and that they would probably want to get involved very soon.

On September 24 I met with Dick Fernandez of Clergy and Laymen Concerned. Fernandez said that we needed more administrative organization. We must have a letter head, with ten or fifteen impressive names on it if we wanted to do any serious fundraising. He stressed the importance of well-known people doing fund-raising, particularly Doug Dowd or Staughton Lynd. He said that people with big money would respond much better to them than to unknowns. He also scoffed at our projected budget of \$15,000 and said that we would need much more than that if we were going to be real. He gave me a few names of people to talk to, but said it would be better if Staughton did fund-raising. I asked him to get Clergy and Laymen to develop a program on foreign policy to present to our conference. Fernandez said that this was unlikely because we aren't real enough and don't have enough money or people to make it real in the near future. One helpful hint: if we want to find out what our real resources are, we should require local chapters after the national conference to submit plans for how they will carry out the national program in in their area, including their projected local budget.

On September 25 I met with Harold and Ruth Jacobs (former members of the Berkeley Red Family and of Berkeley women's movement, respectively) who are now living in Kingston, New York. They were interested, and will attempt to develop a program around foods and related consumer issues. They are currently publishing a newspaper called Live! and might publicize NAM in it. They objected to the October and November meetings both being in Chicago and hence requiring two trips in such a short period of time and said they probably wouldn't come but would set up a local meeting of people interested in the NAM.

On September 26 I met with people in American Independent Movement in New Haven. Rick Wolff said that they had been around for seven years, and many groups have come by to form national organizations. They had been burned many times and had had disastrous experiences at conferences like NCNP. Worse: despite all our precautions, there could be no guarantee that the crazy attacks that came down in Seattle wouldn't be repeated here and that movement people wouldn't come to rehash all the old debates. A woman in attendance stated that she was not interested in going to a conference that gives a home for new lefties. If it were a meeting of ten local AIM's that would be one thing, but I can't bring the people I work with to a conference that discusses chauvinism or something of the sort. Another woman: People don't trust you because of ideas, they need to know you for a long time. So an organization can't be founded on the essentially transient types who made up the New Left. Wolff: we are organizing people where they work, at the point of production, rather than into the more visible public activities that NAM would be into. We organize people into unions. We don't create city-wide organizations. There's no interest in a mass organization amongst the people we work with. John Wilhelm: I couldn't even form a mass organization on my block, much less in the U.S. Bob Cook: Large numbers of people are not ready to join a socialist organization that is explicitly socialist. Wolff: What's more, it will never work at

this point, because the New Left is so anti-organizational form that the people who join your organization will never accept the discipline of an organization so it will not ever be able to do anything. Cook: Of course, we hope you do succeed and hope we are wrong. Wilhelm: You could probably get 100 people in New Haven to join NAM, but when they got together you wouldn't have anything like a movement. Cook: If you could get to people who have not been part of things in the past to join then it might work. But how do you do it--it's so hard to be perceived as trustworthy. Maybe Nader is a model, though of how that can be done. Wolff: Even if you got people they would be dabble-dabblers. I don't think Nader could get together people in New Haven outside of Yale. If you want an organization that has any discipline you haven't a prayer. Wilhelm: I've never assigned lack of a national something or other as being the cause of any particular problem I run into in my local work. Cook: Of course, if we think you won't generate much in the way of working class organizers, we should also say that AIM hasn't generated much working class organizers either, but that's because they aren't ready for it yet.

Recommendations

Some recommendations based on reflection and conversations in the past few weeks, which recommendations will certainly be discussed in part at the October 9-11 meetings in Chicago.

1. Mass or cadre: we must orient towards becoming a mass organization from the start. There should never be any ambiguity about this in any of our statements about ourselves or the way we talk about the world. We are part of the American people and we are part of the working class. One of the things we need, in this connection, is a clearer statement about the high degree of differentiation amongst the working class, and the way in which everyone is encouraged not to think of themselves as workers. At the same time, we will need cadre as a part of our organization who can play a major role in doing some of the bringing things together that people who are engaged in work all week simply can't do. The problem is to develop a cadre that does not see itself as the *raison d'être* of the organization. We should have an organizers training session for a week or two in the spring, and a summer training session on each coast to last a month each, at which cadre can be trained.

2. The conference. The conference should be open to everyone who signs an application form which says, in part, "Yes, I agree with the basic thrust of the NAM document. I want to build NAM in my home town and I want to come to a conference at which we will choose a national priority around which local NAM chapters will put some of their effort."

In this connection, it is important to stress that this conference is a conference to build NAM, not just to build a particular program, so we should not recruit people to this conference who agree, say, with the economic program but do not want to build NAM. It is important that this conference really attempt to lay the foundation for a new organization and not just for a program, though the two are intimately connected. I do not think that in any formal way the conference should found NAM, but rather should found something like a national organizing committee (or constitute itself as such) for the NAM. But while it does not form NAM formally, a crucial think that should come out of the conference besides the national

program for the first year is a strategy for building a June conference that is the founding conference of the NAM and which conference is really much more representative of a. sections of the working class not yet contacted by November, and b. regions of the country which have not yet heard about NAM.

We should require people to read the document and sign some sort of application in which they state their basic agreement with it and with the tasks of the conference. But given that limitation on who actually comes, we should make a big push to advertise this conference and get the word out to as much of the American public as possible. We should have our travellers seek interviews in local above ground newspapers and radio and t.v. in which they tell about the conference and where to write for more information. We should buy an ad in the New York Review of Books and in selected labor union journals in left-leaning labor unions. We should seek to mail information to membership lists of radical caucuses of professional and labor associations. We should radically reverse the present process in which people learn about NAM only through word of mouth. And we should seek to make the conference well-known afterwards through the media. The word must go out to as large a section of the American public as possible that something significant in the political arena is happening --not just another gathering of new leftists. Any program that is developed, particularly one attacking Nixon's economics, should be widely publicized so that people who would want to rally in such a struggle would learn about us as the place to do so. Initially we will probably not have much cadre in Duluth or Fresno or Mobile, but there are likely to be people there who if they hear that there is a place that they can go to join in the struggle will in fact do so. Our program must be very public. Coupled with this we must develop soon a strategy for what people in local chapters should be doing till June. For the reasons that the Steve Max group state above, I think we have to be careful about the formation of local chapters. It may be that what we want to tell the people who write to us from Duluth is that since we are not yet ready to send cadre to help them form a chapter and since we are fearful that chapters formed without a careful plan will quickly fall apart, we urge the postponement of the formation of a chapter and instead that they should engage in word-spreading and getting other people in their area interested in NAM until we form ourselves formally in June (and in the meantime, maybe they can present a plan for how to build a chapter in their area, and then receive a traveller who helps them set up some initial meetings about NAM). Or they work on the national program and motivate activity around it, keeping the actual formation of a NAM chapter explicit but in the background, until maybe a few weeks before the June conference, and then focus initial discussions on the questions that will come up at that conference.

3. Organizational structure. I favor an open statement from the beginning that we expect some amount of discipline in the organization, including chain of command arrangements in the staff. If a national office is set up, for instance, not everyone who works for it automatically has the same status or decision making powers in the organization, because democratic decision making requires that the people elected democratically have more power in decisions than those who have been hired or volunteer for specific tasks assigned to them. Chapters can be expelled if they refuse to work on the national priorities or if they reject the basic political outline of the NAM document.

4. Political ideology. We must try to walk the line between the too inexplicit political ideology that was required for SDS membership and the too rigorous line of a sect group. We cannot be all things to all persons, and we must insist on what we are for. We must attempt to say some things about the world without saying everything. In short, we must attempt to be a mass socialist formation, that has a class analysis, but we must not attempt to be the group that has all the answers, and become a very large sect group (which, I believe, is what Buhle and others would lead us to). The NAM revised pamphlet that appears in the first newsletter has an analysis which should be our basic starting point. While parts of it should be refined, for sure, and while the whole thing should probably be re-written for mass consumption (possibly in a variety of different styles to appeal to different constituencies), I believe that the basic political line that appears there in all its particulars should be NAM's political line, and that that statement is the model for the level of generality and the level of specificity that we need in the organization. Questions that have been answered in it need to be answered at this historical moment, and questions that have been left unanswered should be left unanswered at this moment. In short, that statement should be our basic political self-definition. Of course, when programs for the next year are debated, we will need a much more careful analysis of present America to decide which program to adopt. But such a more detailed analysis should be presented and voted up or down in terms of the program it advances, and it should be [possible for] people to be part of NAM while disagreeing with what the majority votes on as a program and analysis for a particular year. But, on the contrary, it should be a defining part of NAM that its members at least agree with the very general analysis that appears in the NAM revised pamphlet. In this connection, there should be no ambiguity that this is an organization for people who believe in socialism. That simply cannot be an open question in this organization in any sense. What can be an open question is how in the next year people can be best moved to see the need for socialism. We must set as a high priority for discussion in local chapters how to make it possible for there to be comradely debate and disagreement within our organization without having everyone try to make the organization into exclusively their organization. This is a tendency not just of sect groups but of loads of individuals.

5. Alienating social relations. We should try to a very high degree to make it possible for people working together to get to know each other personally, establish informal gatherings and parties and retreats and so on so that the alienation effect does not make it impossible for people to work in this organization. At the same time, we must unequivocally reject the notion that somehow politics will just become one large orgasm of pleasure. We will be holding meetings with people who not only do not know each other but who come from different lifestyles and areas of concern. People come to meetings not to find a place for personal communication, but to get something done, and if nothing gets done they leave and let the organization be solely for people who come to meetings to find each other. Hence, the decay of New Left forms. We have meetings of chapters, not communes. We must understand that meetings will be alienating, and people who expect non-alienating meetings or a groovy conference with nothing but good vibes, really ought to go elsewhere. In this connection, we should strongly encourage the use of parliamentary procedure as a fair way of helping different opinions to get voiced and voted on.

LETTERS

SANDY AND HAROLD HENDERSON

September 14, 1971
Peoria, Illinois

Sisters and Brothers,

If you're not already a movement person nor an intellectual, NAM's current platform (in the first newsletter) has little to offer you. It's too intellectual and too rhetorical. We think it should be rewritten according to these guidelines:

- 1) Leave out all movement slang and rhetoric.
- 2) Spend more space on programs than on analysis, and put the programs first.
- 3) Use "we" not "they".

In short, pretend you're at someone's doorstep in the Northside of Peoria. This is not to say that the platform is the first or even second thing you hit people with. It's a back-up, but it's important for that back-up to be good. So why these particular guidelines?

1) Words like "socialism," "exploiters," "sexism" are movement shorthand for very complex realities and ideas. Among small groups with a common background they may be useful. But to most Americans, this jargon is either meaningless or else means something very different. It also can give movement folk the feeling that we know more -- that we have a more comprehensive and helpful vision -- than we really do. We need to go back to the people, listen to them, learn from them. When we do have something important to say, we should be able to say it in clear everyday language -- not shorthand. If we can't, we may not really know what we're talking about.

The substance of NAM's platform does not require this shorthand: we can defend our ideas of economic and political democracy without using the word "socialism". We would understand ourselves better and be understood better without it. Eliminating the jargon would make it far easier for us to relate both to Peoria and to NAM.

2) "'Now that nobody can overhear us,' Don Paolo said to Ciccavo, 'do you really agree with all that is said at the meeting?' At that Ciccavo lost patience.

'What do you mean by always talking about 'agreeing,' sir?' he said, angrily. 'What has that got to do with it? When it's fine or when it rains, do you ask if we agree? Rain is a fact, not a word. Facts are one thing and words are another, like men and women. A thousand women don't make one man!'" (Bread and Wine)

Putting the analysis first; filling long unbroken columns of type with it; spending more time on it than on all the programs put together -- all these are just making NAM's platform an end in itself. No one with real needs to be met can put much faith in that.

3) NAM's programs should be seen as dealing with our own needs too, not just other people's. We are not outside missionaries, we too are taxpayers, parents, city dwellers, all the rest of it. If we see ourselves as pure organizers with no needs of our own, then other people would surely be right to distrust us.

We feel these to be fundamental criticisms. The attitudes involved go beyond the platform. If they are not met, we will find it difficult to relate to NAM except on a program-by-program basis.

HARRY BOYTE

September 16, 1971

. . . Since my last letter, we've had further evidence of the [Southern organizers] conference's success--several of the more "apolitical" people around here, those most alienated in the past from "theory" and "party line politics," were quite excited by the weekend; several have formed a political discussion group. I think simply the fact that people could sharply disagree, and at times, like the working class caucus' report, challenge the very basis of others' style and approach, and continue talking to each other in a rational way afterwards reflects both a considerable increase in the sanity of the southern left in the last couple of years and also the power of the desire of people to recreate a left environment--the home that the Rothstein critique talks about.

We had several impressions of their piece: we agreed it was sensitive and insightful, especially the first section that analyzed the different and conflicting needs of middle class radicals and working people in an organization. And we agree that the differences inevitably will create difficulties in recruiting large numbers of working people. But there are a number of other considerations:

-- The characterization of NAM as either a mass organization or a cadre organization obscures too much: if NAM is to be effective it will be neither a tight, disciplined cadre formation, committed to developing a finely detailed political line, nor simply a mass left conglomeration of different elements. It will rather be an organization which does develop a political focus which is clear (which is why the kind of program it adopts is so important). And it will be an organization which develops, hopefully, an identity of its own as well--that maintains an open, nonpolemical, pragmatic style. With such a character, the serious questions of how to mobilize people around radical program develop a critical priority--the kind of questions that Alice pointed out in another context are precisely those working class people have real expertise about. In such a context working people need not feel continually assaulted by heavy theoretical abstractions. And to speak to the other dimension of NAM's function, that of providing an instrument for the radicalization of mass struggle, if the first elements are present it can effectively maintain the common core of assumptions as well, without turning people off,--the integrity of a free and human, consistently socialist vision, a radical break with the present order, a vision which doesn't weaken the political foundations for the sake of "large numbers."

-- The question of student/nonstudent is still an important one in dealing with the problem of developing an organization in which working people feel comfortable. The interests of college students--whether in elite or working class colleges--are quite different from those of working people even their own age--and different too from ex-student radicals. I'd like still to see discussion of the idea of two sections.

-- The needs of ex-college radicals of the type that came to the southern conference, which will probably be a rough approximation of the kind of folks a "working class oriented" NAM would appeal to, are certainly different from working people's needs, but the difference is not a chasm. I think the southern conference showed that the need for a party that would be disciplined, theoretically precise, etc.,

is not nearly as intense as the need for a reconstructed community, the need for a medium to discuss work, and the need for a mechanism to relate the isolated individual or collective to a national force that is addressing the broad political events of our time.

-- The "historic" need for a coherent left presence that can impress upon the popular consciousness its own analysis of the intensifying crises of the current period--from the continually worsening economic situation to the war to Attica--is so urgent that some "risk" must be taken--as the discussion summary you sent seemed to accept. And it is at this point that the "dialectics" of working class recruitment are most apparent: the presence of some kind of organization may well be the precondition for its own fulfillment--the external profile that the organization projects, how it appears to the American public, will be largely a function of its program. And to the extent that it reorders working people's consciousness of the "left alternative," to the extent that it projects an image of the left that is rooted in the concern and pain of "ordinary people's lives," it builds the necessary foundations for recruitment, the foundations that do not presently exist, and which may be impossible to achieve without a national left presence that can co-ordinate a central program.

-- The southern conference showed, I think, that even in a context where strikingly opposed political tendencies are present a certain civility can be maintained: people can continue to listen to each other, share experiences, develop a feeling of comradeship. And an organization like NAM, consciously determined to develop a comradely style, consciously committed to struggling with the problems of building an organization that can be a home for working people as well as middle class radicals, should be able to have real, and growing, successes in broadening the social base of the left. . . .

TOM CLEAVER (1)

September 17, 1971

I received the September 11 informational letter, and wrote the accompanying paper as a response to the discussions of how to break out of the middle class base and develop a working class organization.

Naturally, this proposal does not seek to limit organizing efforts to the two areas discussed (the army and community colleges). It is merely a program for an organizing effort in sectors of the community immediately accessible to the people presently in NAM, that provide potential for reaching out in the future directly to the working class. The proposals certainly should not be seen by anyone as saying that present working class organizing projects be abandoned because the organizers are not of working class background. As I read the paper over, I see a couple things that could be taken as "digs" at people from middle class backgrounds; they should not be taken as such. They come from the fact that it's only been in the last year or so that I have decided to be proud of my own background, which I used to hide.

It is my immediate hope that NAM will contact the United States Servicemen's Fund and try to get observers to come to the October meeting. I am sure you know personally about what USSF is doing and the importance of developing interorganizational relations--at the very least--with them if we cannot get the two groups to come together

as part of a single organization. From what I know of NAM out here and what I know of the people back east who are mentioned in your newsletter, NAM is about the only national organization that might hold any attraction to the people in USSF and the GIs they work with.

I hope you can show my little proposal around to people, since it is impossible for me to attend the Chicago meeting personally and give a presentation of my own. It is provided as a thought-provoker.

[See WHERE THE MIDDLE CLASS MEETS THE WORKING CLASS in PROGRAM section]

TOM CLEAVER (2)

September 23, 1971

The idea about a workshop for GI support for the Thanksgiving conference is a good one, one we are already thinking about out here, as a matter of fact. Roger Hamilton, a guy named Jack McCloskey who's active with Bay Area Vets for Peace, and myself are starting to get together to set up a program proposal for submission at the conference. We will send the proposal with a capable representative, but neither Roger nor myself are in any position financially to do any travelling, no matter how worthy the cause.

Our primary thrust was towards developing programs that would relate to ex-GIs, mostly the vets on the campuses; who--it is our experience--are the most together people and the least organized of any potential student group. For instance, out here in California, the Chancellor of the State College system has proposed an open admissions program for veterans, where any vet who applied--regardless of academic background--would be accepted to one of the state colleges; upon successful completion of a semester of work, he would be considered a regular student. Obviously, this program is one that relates positively towards non-white and working class youth, since being a high school dropout, etc., would not be held against the applicant. The state college trustees are expected to vote favorably on the proposal at their next meeting in November, and the program would go into effect in September 1972. Immediately, several problems come up that we think the state college system is incapable of fulfilling that a local NAM chapter could do that would bring them into contact with the vets. Even if the man is capable of handling the work to begin with in terms of educational background, he has been away from school awhile and will have trouble getting back into the swing of things; if he is working class or lumpen in background, what time he spent in school was totally inadequate for him to survive in college, and he will generally fail. The campus counseling programs are already overloaded, and the additional burden of several hundred new people needing their services would push them to the breaking point. Here we are: the NAM chapter sets up an aid service to help veterans get used to being back in an academic environment, and sets up a tutorial program for the vets from disadvantaged backgrounds. Hopefully, we would involve the veterans who are already on-campus in running this kind of a program, since they would be most easily able to relate to the problems the new vets were having, having survived them themselves. Out of this, NAM becomes the organization that is the friend of the veteran on-campus, just as the movement is the friend of the vet when he's active. This is only the most immediate thing we've come up with, as the idea that this program would be instituted only became public this last week.

Additionally, we were thinking of introducing some policy resolutions, for the conference, so that NAM could be on record as being in favor of abolition of the UCMJ, restructuring of the military, etc.

If you get in touch with any active-duty groups, please have them get in touch with us through me, to tell us what they think any active program of support by NAM for the GI movement should have. [Tom Cleaver, 49 Broderick Street, Apt. 16, San Francisco, California 94117] That way, we can expand what we were going to send from being a program relating primarily to veterans to one that relates to both veterans and active-duty GIs. . . .

JANE HIRSCHMANN

September 27, 1971
New York City

. . . I am very excited about the possibilities of NAM; however, one word of caution from my own experience. I had been active in an organization called SWWM (Social Welfare Workers' Movement) where an attempt is being made nationally to bring together workers in the human services field around a socialist perspective. In my opinion SWWM is weak because local groups are doing their own thing without much connection to each other or without a sense of a national movement. Our newspaper coming out of Cleveland is informative and states the overall ideology and struggle of SWWM people, however I felt there was no national direction which local struggling groups could hook into.

TRAVELER'S REPORTS (con.)

JANE SLAUGHTER AND RANDY BREGMAN

September 30, 1971

[Jane and Randy called in from Columbia, South Carolina. They had been travelling for about a week in North and South Carolina.

At Chapel Hill they had a good meeting with a number of persons brought together by the Boytes, who had not previously known each other. This group will meet again October 4 to form an NAM chapter and probably send a second person together with Harry Boyte to represent them at the October 9-11 meeting.

Jane and Randy also talked with George Vlasits in Fayetteville, with Mike Smedberg and Cathy Cross in Raleigh, with Peter Brandon and others in Charlotte. They were going on to Atlanta, where Sue Thrasher had set up a meeting for them, and then to Birmingham, Nashville and Louisville en route to Chicago.

Jane and Randy report the following questions which they felt needed better answers than they were able to give: How can NAM call itself socialist and yet recruit non-socialists? What is NAM's approach to organizing at the point of production vs. community organizing? What do we see as the post-NAM move from reform to revolution? What will be the actual mechanisms for introducing working people who come into NAM to socialism? How can NAM avoid being reformist, like the Communist Party and the CIO?]

PROGRAM SUGGESTIONS

WHERE THE MIDDLE CLASS MEETS THE WORKING CLASS: A Commentary on Organizing Possibilities With Existing Groups by Tom Cleaver

There are two particular areas where middle class youth and working class youth meet in positions of relative equality of social position, where class differences are at minimum, and where organizing effort has already gone into creating a political movement. These two areas are the armed forces and the community--or "junior"--colleges. The following is a discussion of organizing possibilities in these two areas in the immediate future for NAM. (By immediate future, I mean during the next twelve months.)

THE ARMED FORCES

This is the one place where young men of all classes meet in a position of complete equality, the equality of the shit pile. The physical differences between long-hair and short-hair, "straight" and "hip," are erased in the barber's chair on the first day; all other external differences which serve to divide people in civilian life are submerged in a sea of Army green. In recruit camp, men are willing to listen to anyone with a halfway-rational explanation of why they are where they are. The war in Vietnam has created more serious radicals among military men than almost any other sector of the population.

For at least the last three years, the movement has made attempts to link up the civilian antiwar movement with the GI movement. Save for the efforts of the United States Servicemen's Fund, which supports the GI coffeehouses and many of the on-base underground GI newspapers, the civilian movement has not had much success in working with soldiers. There are some limited exceptions, where men who were already activists with organizations such as YSA have become active in the Army and had outside support from their organization, but this has been generally limited to trying to gain more members for the particular organization. This lack of success in bringing together GIs and civilians has not been for lack of enthusiasm for the idea on the part of soldiers. Nearly every GI organization can tell stories of working with civilians, and of being screwed by them--either by acts of commission or, more usually, acts of omission--at times when the soldiers were depending very much on the outside support they expected from these groups. The response of soldiers has been to draw back, to depend on themselves and individual civilian organizers who have worked with their movement and proven themselves to be a part of it.

An Organizing Proposal:

Where possible in local areas, NAM chapters should make a strong effort to make contact with the GI movement on the base nearby; the movement exists on every base in the country, so the major hurdle is merely to contact it. The chapter should try to work with the group in a supporting capacity, providing facilities for printing newspapers, leaflets, etc., providing publicity and gaining civilian support for political actions organized by the soldiers, developing programs to provide legal aid for GIs harassed by military authorities for political acts. At all times, the chapter should remember that when they

make a commitment of support, that commitment must take priority over other activities until it is fulfilled. Otherwise, the soldiers will rightly feel themselves left in the lurch, and that will mark the end of any cooperation between the two groups. NAM as a whole will prove itself worthy of GI support and cooperation by its actions, not its words. Ideally, ex-GIs in local NAM chapters should take the initiative in setting up these programs and being responsible for them in the chapter, since they know far better than someone who has not been in the military what the needs of soldiers are in the way of support; additionally, the active-duty GIs will relate better initially to ex-GIs, because they will share something in common.

At all costs, chapters should avoid what happened to the University of Texas SDS chapter in the fall of 1968. Soldiers at Fort Hood, working with The Oleo Strut coffeehouse, were organizing a GI Day rally, to be held in a park in Austin, with active-duty soldiers as the main speakers. The SDS chapter was to print up a leaflet the soldiers had designed, and distribute it in Austin, to bring civilians to the rally, since a large public turnout and attendant publicity was the best defense the soldiers could have against subsequent military harassment. The SDSers lost the leaflet, made up a poor substitute, didn't get adequate distribution, and completely failed to provide any substantial civilian attendance at the rally. Soldiers, who had gone AWOL against orders restricting them to the base, in order to attend the rally, outnumbered the civilians 2-1. After this debacle, the GI organizers decided to organize themselves in a way that they would no longer have to depend on civilians--beyond the Oleo Strut staff and a few other individuals--for any help. This attitude has continued virtually unaltered to this day.

Chapters should also realize that GI activists are usually much more serious and businesslike than the usual civilian movement group. Meetings start on time, authority is delegated, responsibility for completing assigned tasks is expected, votes are taken to determine policy. Since this is supposed to be the organizational style of NAM, we should have more success than other groups in working with soldiers than other civilian groups have had.

On an immediate, national, organizational level, travelling NAM organizers should definitely stop and visit any GI coffeehouse in the area they are travelling in. Where they find no coffeehouse or other public manifestation of the GI movement, they should try to meet people who have contact with the local movement, and talk to the soldiers. Some members of the National Interim Organizing Committee should definitely visit the United States Servicemen's Fund office in Cambridge (97 School Street) and talk with Josh Gould, the organizational secretary. Beyond this, invitations should be sent to USSF to be distributed to all GI groups and coffeehouses they are in contact with, asking them to send representatives to the Thanksgiving conference.

Potential Importance of This:

The GI movement is comprised today mostly of men of working class background. One of the major reasons USSF sees for contacting soldiers and working with them is their potential as organizers when they return to civilian life. Getting these men interested in NAM is one way of recruiting people who can reach the working class as organizers in the next several years.

THE COMMUNITY COLLEGES:

In the Bay Area, the most together campus movement of any school exists at City College of San Francisco. Strong movements of varying size exist at the other community colleges in the area. These schools are the only place where an interracial movement exists with any degree of success. The organizers I know personally on these campuses see their position as a class position, rather than a race position, which to me is the reason why cooperation between various ethnic groups has been possible. According to a recent survey, 85% of the student body at City College come from families with an income less than \$8,000 per year; 90% come from families where the parents have a high school education or less. This is the working class, and the figures are either the same or higher at the other community colleges with the exception perhaps of the College of Marin. Since the white students come from similar class backgrounds to the non-white students --a situation that does not exist on most four-year campuses--the needs are the same and coalitions around specific programs can be built. At the community colleges in the Bay Area, the cry is for community control in determining what programs shall be developed, the move is the same. At City College, where the movement is most advanced, tripartite committees, composed of 50% administrators and faculty and 50% students, are the final boards of decision from areas of Hiring, Retention & Tenure, to Program Development, to Services Development such as the new student health center. Movements are afoot to gain similar power on several other community college campuses as a result of the City College example.

The students at these community colleges do not cooperate much with movements at the four-year schools because of a feeling many expressed to me that they were being patronized and looked down on by the primarily middle class and upper middle class student activists at the other schools. The exception to this is SF State, which is the school most City College students transfer to after two years. This is having good effect at State, which has been virtually paralyzed since Dr. Hayakawa took over, now that students who have gone through a very together movement are starting to show up on the State campus.

Organizing Proposal:

I believe that primary campus-organizing efforts by NAM should be directed towards the community colleges. Where a movement already exists, NAM should work to develop organizational cooperation; in other areas where such movements do not exist, emphasis should be given to building them. The City College movement was originated by a group of primarily middle class students with some organizing experience, but the strike that occurred after the Cambodia invasion brought new people into the forefront, and more representative leadership was developed in the following year, to the point that today the leadership of the United Student Association is very representative of the student body as a whole. Since it is relatively easy to become a student at a community college, due to lower admission standards and reduced financial costs, the same thing could be done at any campus, provided the original organizers see their prime personal duty as working themselves out of a job.

The importance of developing movements at the community colleges rather than the four-year colleges and universities can be seen in the family background statistic quoted above. The community college is indeed where the middle class meets the working class. Two things are immediately accomplished at the community colleges when a movement is developed: people going on to four-year schools will gain a non-middle class perspective about the movement, and potential organizers will be developed among those students who go to work at the conclusion of their two years at school. As with the Army, the community colleges are where we will meet the people who will eventually do the organizing of the working class. The community college is also a good place for middle class people to go to rid themselves of some of the illusions about we of the working class that I see in the September 11 newsletter and that I have seen on the part of most middle-class comrades over the last six years.

Immediately, national travellers should concentrate on making contact with existing movements on community college campuses, and personal invitations should be extended for these movements to send delegates and observers to the Thanksgiving convention. Beyond this, local and regional chapters should definitely put as much of their organizing effort as possible to contacting movements at the community colleges and doing whatever they can to help build and strengthen these movements.

BICENTENNIAL: TASK FORCE by Jeremy Rifkin

The New Left must be willing to meet people where they are at rather than where it would like them to be. Millions of Americans are aware, for the first time, of the fact that many of America's economic, social, and political institutions are performing in ways that undermine the revolutionary ideals and principles to which the nation purports to be dedicated. But for many Americans the principles--if not the language--enunciated in the Port Huron statement of 1962 and the Berkeley Free Speech Movement of 1963 and the Russell War Crimes Tribunal of 1967 are only now just beginning to make sense. If the New Left hopes to engage this new consciousness and give it positive direction through political struggle, it must first take a long hard look at itself and what it represents.

The left movement's character has become increasingly strange and at times even frightening to many Americans. Most people perceive little or nothing in common with the New Left. At present, the New Left has found no way of dealing with this fear and misunderstanding, since it has abandoned or rejected much of the heritage and most of the symbols to which the great majority of American people can respond.

The left's rejection of the American experience is due, in part, to its failure to understand that the American legacy is at once both reactionary and revolutionary.

Our revolutionary beliefs--popularized through the words and deeds of such great Americans as Thomas Paine, Benjamin Rush, Sam Adams, Henry Thoreau, William Lloyd Garrison, John Brown, Lucy Stone,

Sojourner Truth, Eugene V. Debs, W. E. B. DuBois, Mark Twain, and A. J. Muste, and the movements they inspired or led--derive from the principle of the inherent unity and fraternity of all mankind.

These aspirations have led to a set of beliefs that forms the revolutionary aspect of the American experience--human equality; respect for the judgment of the common man; distrust of those who command positions of power and privilege; allegiance to freedom of expression and the right of self-determination; cooperative enterprise; government of the people, by the people, for the people; conscience above property and institutions; sympathetic interest in the new, the untried, the unexplored; equality of opportunity, confidence in the ability of the people to create a more just and humane world; faith in the brotherhood of all mankind.

Our reactionary beliefs--popularized through the words and deeds of such Americans as Alexander Hamilton, John Adams, and John D. Rockefeller--come from the principle that hostility and war, the survival of the fittest and to hell with the rest--the public be damned--constitute the natural condition of man. This principle is the basis of a set of beliefs that forms the reactionary aspect of the American experience--the sacred value of private property; the ruthlessly competitive spirit as the motivating force for self-fulfillment; the authoritarian family; material accumulation as a measure of man's achievement on earth.

The crisis of American beliefs lies in the increasing polarization of both the revolutionary and reactionary elements in the American legacy.

The escalating political and economic crisis does not alter the basic positive truths of the American heritage. On the contrary, it would be impossible to point out the contradictions in the American system--to expose the exploitation and dehumanization at all levels of American life--without in some way appealing to the revolutionary beliefs and ideals with which so many Americans identify.

The growing crisis has brought into question the more reactionary aspects of the American tradition. Those beliefs which reinforce our economic system and which have, for so long, provided a rationalization for the individual's role within that system are under unprecedented attack.

The new awareness that this country is in the midst of a grave crisis--a realization which millions of Americans have acquired in recent years--can lead to a mass-based revolutionary struggle if the movement will discard its self-imposed ideological isolation and begin to reidentify with the revolutionary principles and beliefs of the American heritage.

At this critical stage in American history, it makes no sense for the New Left to allow the defenders of the system the advantage of presenting themselves and their institutions as the true heirs and defenders of the American revolutionary tradition. Instead, the revolutionary heritage must be used as a tactical weapon to isolate the existing institutions and those in power by constantly focusing public attention on their inability to translate our revolutionary dreams into reality.

The Bicentennial Campaign

The Federal government and the nation's business community have launched a five-year multi-million dollar campaign leading up to the celebration of America's 200th birthday in 1976--to rekindle the "Spirit of '76" and to promote the words and deeds of the Founding Fathers. The left must take this up as a challenge and turn it into a campaign designed to create a mass revolutionary consciousness in tune with the revolutionary legacy of 1776.

Reinforcing the revolutionary beliefs is essential because it provides continuity with the heritage of the past. This identification is necessary to create an atmosphere of confidence among the people in their ability to shape the future, to explore and enter unfamiliar areas of experience.

Understanding the revolutionary currents and movements that have influenced American life can also help those of us already involved in political struggle in developing a revolutionary perspective that is germane for America. Past struggles in America, such as the abolitionist and women's suffrage movements, and the farmer and labor insurgencies, cannot be expected to provide a blueprint for revolution in the 1970s, but they can tell us much about American behavior and the American character. We cannot build a contemporary revolution without an acute awareness of ourselves as a people, as citizens of a nation born in revolution.

A genuine understanding of revolutionary ideals is what links Thomas Paine, Sam Adams, and Benjamin Rush, and the American people, with Lenin, Mao, Che, and the struggles of all oppressed people in the world. Not until the masses of Americans begin to re-identify with these principles and develop their own revolutionary struggle will they be able to form a real bond of fraternalism and solidarity with the struggles of all oppressed people. Solidarity comes from understanding the collective nature of our separate struggles and the cry for humanity that is shared by all.

Without confidence in our revolutionary heritage, deteriorating economic and social conditions are liable to lead to an increased sense of hopelessness and fear, and a defense of the most reactionary aspects of the American ideology--with appeals to national honor, duty, courage, and vigilance in protection of the mother country--as the American people make a desperate attempt to hold onto what is familiar in their everyday life.

Our first step must be to find out who we are and how to build on the base erected in the revolution of 1776 and refurbished in the successive dramas of change that characterize the most affirmative periods of American history.

The black movement had to rediscover the positive aspects of its own heritage in order to build an identity that would give it confidence in its ability to initiate action, sustain discipline, and win support from the black community. The white movement must do the same. Confidence in our ability to maintain discipline and to develop a long range revolutionary perspective that is neither rigid nor authoritarian must come from an understanding of who we are; and most of what we are has to do with our unique American heritage. Such an

understanding will help bring together the existing factions and groupings within the New Left community itself and help us reach out to the great mass of American people.

Setting Up Peoples Bicentennial Commissions

Each state has established an official Bicentennial Commission to coordinate activities and programs between now and 1976. NAM chapters could research the methods for selection of the commissions and expose the patronage and non-representative nature of the boards; i.e. too few youth, blacks, women, native Americans on the commissions.

NAM could also petition for appointments to the commissions and present detailed proposals for state wide bicentennial activities.

Before or after the exposes and petitioning NAM chapters could establish a Peoples Bicentennial Commission on the state or local level and engage community people, unions, civic organizations, academic and professional people, grade school, high school, and college students, in Bicentennial programs and activities. Peoples Bicentennial Commissions can offer a focus for involving large numbers of people, publicizing NAM programs, and recruiting people into local chapters.

Programs and Activities

* NAM chapters could put out a state or local Bicentennial newsletter or paper which would examine the American experience within the context of radical programs and demands. Regional histories of farmer, labor, and women's struggles could be used to forge community identification with NAM programs and goals.

* NAM chapters could put together a radical calendar and journal depicting historic moments in peoples struggles in the state and include within it an outline of NAM programs and goals. These publications could be distributed free and on a daily basis at county and state fairs, state parks, monuments, the state capitol, and other sites where people tour and vacation. This offers a good opportunity to reach thousands of people--especially grade school and high school students--with NAM programs and peoples Bicentennial activities. Peoples Bicentennial posters, buttons, bumper stickers, etc. could also be used in a similar fashion.

* NAM chapters could present detailed proposals for Peoples Bicentennial study programs in the grade and high schools. Emphasis should be placed on the contradiction between the revolutionary and reactionary beliefs of the American legacy and on the contemporary examination of those contradictions within the local community. High school groups might undertake Nader type programs to research the history of land ownership and corporate and governmental controls in the community--to learn first hand about capitalist exploitation. Students could also integrate revolutionary study programs with field trips into the community and discussion sessions with NAM and other radical community projects on the theme of revolutionary parallels 1776-1976.

* NAM's Peoples Bicentennial could commission plays on revolutionary moments in American history to tour schools, civic organizations, unions, community groups, and GI projects. Again this offers an opportunity to reach new audiences. Plays could be followed by discussion sessions on community and national problems and NAM programs for change.

* Peoples Bicentennial Commissions could sponsor art exhibits, poetry readings, essay contests, and music festivals with a peoples Bicentennial motif.

* Resolutions could be introduced in city councils and in state legislatures on setting aside days for observance of historic moments in regional struggles; legislation calling for the renaming of streets, buildings, and parks can also be introduced. This is a good way to open up controversy and do political education in the community and the state around the true meaning of the American radical tradition.

* Aside from engaging large numbers of people for the first time--who might not feel comfortable relating directly to NAM, the Peoples Commissions provide a unique forum for mass media exposure over the next four years. This mechanism should be used to raise political awareness and to promote NAM and other radical activities and demands.

A final note

The thing to remember is this. The Government and big business community are going ahead with the most massive propaganda campaign in this country's history over the next four years. Their Bicentennial campaign will attempt to ignore the revolutionary ideals and programs that have inspired periodic grass roots struggles and rather concentrate on the reactionary beliefs that reinforce the capitalist system and its political institutions. If we do not respond, we might find ourselves increasingly isolated and ultimately a target for their chauvinist appeals. If we take the offensive, as outlined here, we can move millions of people in a revolutionary direction during the Bicentennial era by continuing to focus attention on the un-American character of our economic and political leaders and the institutions they represent.

PROPOSAL FOR NAM PROGRAM ON PRISONS

"Come all you prisoners locked in a jail
Don't pay any heed to society's tale
For the walls that they build
Are the proof that they failed
And the great crimes are still free and ragin'
And all of their laws will be to no avail
For the times, they are a changin'."

-Tom Rodd

Introduction: An approach to the question of prisons.

In the wake of Attica, San Quentin, Tomb, etc., we are seeing a great surge of public interest in the question of penal reform. Various groups and individuals of differing political viewpoints will be coming up with ideas which attempt to deal with that monstrosity, the American penal system. Many of the ideas will sound attractive, but it is always a great mistake to jump on the bandwagon before examining the implications involved. Interest in and need for solutions to the problems in America's prisons will not be transitory, and it is important that NAM's position be one which really deals with the questions involved in a humane, socialistic way, and does not merely call for the application of a bandaid to the social sore.

The radical cry of "liberal reformism" is often much more than another example of the empty revolutionary rhetoric which seems to be all too common these days. But we must be careful to look at exactly what context specific reforms are being presented in. NAM's position on prison reform should unequivocally be that the only highly significant reform would be to abolish prisons completely. It is towards this goal that all of our work in this area should ultimately point. This does not mean, however, that we should shun organizing aimed at lesser reforms as meaningless, counterrevolutionary, or whatever. Reforms as opposed to abolition are very important to exactly those people whose leadership on the issue of prisons we should openly acknowledge, the prisoners themselves! The horrible oppression of prison life can crush the strongest and most capable of people. Without the cooperation and leadership of our sisters and brothers behind bars the struggle to abolish prisons is doomed to failure. It is with this loss, as well as our love for our sisters and brothers, in mind that we of New American Movement should support reforms which help prisoners to keep up their spirits in the long struggle ahead.

This proposal will be presented in four parts; a list of desired reforms, an argument for the total abolition of prisons, some possible models to replace the present penal system, and some proposals for actions to be taken on the issue.

Reforms: A Bill of Rights for Prisoners and Ex-convicts.

The idea of penal reforms as a prison Bill of Rights has been used by the California Prisoner's Union, the American Friends Service Committee, and others. It is a useful and powerful notion, both politically and organizationally. What follows is a compilation of various reforms as stated by prisoners and reform groups.

Bill of Rights of Prisoners and Exconvicts

ARTICLE I

Prisoners and ex-convicts (hereafter referred to as the prison population) are entitled to full, complete and equal justice under the law as guaranteed under the United States Constitution.

Section I: Pre and post prison legal redress.

Section II: Right to legal representation with full rights accorded a defendant in a court of law.

Section III: All rights of trial procedures before prison disciplinary courts.

Section IV: The right to file or respond to individual or class action civil or criminal suits.

Section V: Full protection against illegal search and seizure and invasion of privacy, including all mail censorship other than examination for contraband (as has been done in Ohio, by decree of the Governor).

Section VI: The right of self representation with access to a comprehensive and up to date law library fully accessible to all, including those who are illiterate or speak only foreign languages.

Section VII: The right of self determination: political, religious and cultural without prejudice.

Section VIII: To be free from all forms of cruel and unusual (inhuman) punishment: adjustment centers, involuntary segregation, isolation, electric shock treatments, utilization of depressants and tranquilizing drugs for punishment in the name of therapy.

Section IX: To be constitutionally free from all forms of preventative detention such as, "parole holds," excessive bails and prejudicial treatment because of membership in the prison population.

Section X: The right to exercise all forms of peaceful dissent and protest without threat and coercion.

ARTICLE II

The right to complete and full access to all files, documents, records pertaining to oneself. Physical conditions surrounding and/or affecting the members of the prison population.

Section I: Minimum standards of nutrition and apportionment set for all foods served as set by Department of Health, Education, Welfare.

Section II: The right to special diets for members of the prison population wishing them for health or religious reasons.

Section III: Physical housing standard must conform with minimum health, safety, and fire standards that apply to all multiple housing in the state.

Section IV: Exercise and recreation to conform to standards set by Presidents Committee on Physical Fitness.

Section V: The right to voluntary transfers to other prisons when space permits, and the right to refuse any involuntary transfers.

ARTICLE III

Fair and impartial medical treatment in the true sense of the Hippocratic Oath.

Section I: Full time professional medical doctors (with translators for those not speaking English) on duty twenty-four hours a day in proportion to the needs of the prisoners; to be determined by the Medical Committee of Human Rights.

Section II: A full and complete medical supportive staff on duty twenty-four hours a day in proportion to the needs of the prisoners; to be determined by the Medical Committee for Human Rights.

Section III: Complete and up to date medical facilities, services and equipment common to all major medical centers.

Section IV: An effective narcotics treatment program available for all prisoners who request it.

ARTICLE IV

Conditions of labor and employment for the prison population.

Section I: No forced labor of any kind to be imposed.

Section II: Structure and purposes of all prison industries and work tasks shall be to train and prepare prisoners for realistic and available employment in outside industries.

Section III: The right to organize and belong to professional and legal unions, related organizations and to receive full benefits that such membership holds or implies.

Section IV: The right to federally set minimum wage standards for all work done in prison industries and work tasks.

Section V: The right of artists, writers and hobbycraft vocations to pursue their artistic professions as a form of approved full time employment while on parole.

Section VI: That no jobs shall be denied to any ex-convict because of his or her prison record.

ARTICLE V

The right of the prison population to demand and be an integral part of upgrading of the qualifications of all personnel within the Departments of Corrections, Adult Authority, Youth Authority, etc., and employees of city and county detention facilities.

ARTICLE VI

The prison population shall be involved in all personnel actions of the above mentioned employees.

ARTICLE VII

The prison population shall pay no federal, state or local taxes in any form without full instatement of rights presently revoked upon felony conviction.

ARTICLE VIII

The prison population shall suffer no monetary penalties for infractions of institutional rules (which must be available in writing to all prisoners), for additional food portioning or for the sale of creative items.

ARTICLE IX

The prison population shall no longer be the victims of system imposed, encouraged and perpetuated racism.

ARTICLE X

Those members of the prison population who are illiterate or speak no English shall be provided with special provisions for education and legal aid.

ARTICLE XI

The prison population shall be afforded the social, psychological and emotional environment, facilities, activities and treatment necessary to promote, develop and maintain individual needs.

Section I: Unlimited visiting rights, including the right of ex-convicts to visit, in a facility conducive to relaxed and natural interaction.

Section II: Conjugal visitation and/or overnite releases shall be utilized for the benefit of prisoners of all institutions.

Section III: Prisoners may decide their own standards for clothes, and hair and beard lengths.

Section IV: Prisoners shall be allowed access to telephones for collect calls.

ARTICLE XII

There shall be an end to the indeterminate sentence laws.

ARTICLE XIII

There shall be an end to all capital punishment.

ARTICLE XIV

There shall be an end to all laws discriminating against felons including those which prevent them from voting, holding public office, serving on juries, and those which/a felony record grounds for spouses to obtain divorce.
make

Abolition: The case for total discontinuance of all prisons.

Both historically and today, American prisons exist because according to the government and many of the citizens they fulfill four supposedly vital social needs: the punishment of law-breakers, the deterrence of potential criminals, the rehabilitation of social misfits, and the segregating of undesirables from society. Examination of the effectiveness of prisons in these four areas reveals that in fact, the American penal system has a negative effect if any!

As far as the function of punishment is concerned, there have been a number of studies done by penologists in the fields of law, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and history, none of which has been able to show that punishment has any positive effect on the prevention or recurrence of "wrong-doing," other than in the cases of very minor infractions. On the contrary, psychologists have long maintained that punishment for misdeeds has a negative effect unless accompanied by positive reinforcement for desired behavior, a condition which is hardly fulfilled by American prisons.

Prisons fail to a similar degree to deter potential criminals. In fact, evidence shows that prisons probably increase the crime rate, let alone lower it. This is probably due both to the nature of prisons and of crime. Most crimes committed are likely to be done either when the law-breaker is so irrational as not to be able to weigh the consequences or, as is probably more usually the case, so rational that the possible consequences are no deterrent at all. A common example of this would be a case where a crime is committed for economic gain where for any number of reasons no other method of enrichment is possible or convenient. That the nature of prisons increases the crime rate is a well documented fact: about 97% of all prisoners are released, and 60-90 % are convicted of another and usually more serious crime within two years. Prisons function as schools for crime and hatred.

It is indeed questionable whether such institutions can serve to rehabilitate anybody either. As Dr. David Greenberg of Chicago Connections has pointed out:

The commonsense observation of the limited utility of institutional reform is supported by the overwhelming weight of controlled research findings: there is no correlation between outcomes (as measured by recidivism) and the kind of institution (reformed or unreformed). The elimination of gratuitous cruelty, while obviously desirable, does not really get at the heart of the matter. The most significant reform would not be to change this or that trivial aspect of life in prison, but to minimize and preferably eliminate, its use.

One does indeed wonder what sort of rehabilitation can go on in prisons when one sees reports such as those of the Chicago Crime Commission and the John Howard Association which point to the conclusion that, in Cook County Jail for instance (where only about 25% of the inmates are serving time), more crimes such as rape occur inside the jail than do on the streets of Chicago during the same time period (one year).

Rehabilitative or treatment penology, such as is advocated by Karl Menninger among others, should in fact be opposed for a number of reasons. This approach assumes that criminal behavior is sick and irrational. If this is false, and facts such as 90% of all crime being economically motivated seem to suggest that it is, then successful "rehabilitation" is no better than brainwashing. No treatment has been shown, statistically, to be successful. And in fact, the approach of forced detention for reorientation shows the same lack of respect for human dignity which is evident in the prison system in general. This "therapeutic" penology is also dangerous in that it allows for a great number of indeterminate sentences (until the "sick" criminal is "cured" - perhaps never). Prison rehabilitation ignores (conveniently) the fact that crime is all too frequently a manifestation of the social contradiction of a society which produces people who refuse to or can't fit into the roles which it has set up for them: poor people steal, radical youths dodge the draft, and heroin becomes a mainstay in lives of those who inhabit our dying cities.

It can hardly be said with any validity that prisons successfully segregate the "social undesirables." Very few of the criminals who contribute to our crime rate are ever caught, and only a small proportion of the total crimes committed make it into the crime rate to begin with. In crime, as in fishing, the big ones always seem to get away. Ralph Nader has charged that consumers lose about \$60 billion every year due to overpricing in violation of federal antitrust legislation. As Fortney H. Stark Jr., the President of Security National Bank in Walnut Creek, California has put it:

throw a few chairmen of the board in jail for polluting the air and water, and you'll see pollution disappear quite rapidly . . . you would also probably see some pretty drastic prison reforms too . . ."

Models: Towards replacing the penal system.

It is obvious that the criminal justice system won't be changed fundamentally until more widespread social and political changes take place. There is little point here to try to imagine what such a system would be like in "the revolutionary society of the future." But it is very useful to show that a number of humane and effective alternatives already exist to our present criminal injustice system.

One possibility is the use of halfway houses, where prisoners sleep at night, and go out during the day to jobs or to school. Work-release programs allowing criminals to keep their freedom as long as they keep their jobs is another alternative. Under the present prison structure, there are also a number of possibilities including furloughs of increasing lengths, until total freedom is granted, increased use of recognizance bonds to keep the non-convicted out of jail, and the increased use of probations instead of sentences. This last method is of course by far the most preferred, as are any of the other possible means of non-confining punishments.

Finally, and we, like millions of others, have been saying for years, we need to increase the use of community service as an alternative to the prison system.

In his article, "The Problem of Prisons," David Greenberg presents two very interesting experimental penal colonies in existence in the world today:

Mexico, for example, maintains Tres Marias, an island penal colony for prisoners with long records of previous offences, with sentences of twenty years or more for murder, assault and other crimes of violence. Prisoners have complete freedom on the island's 34,000 acres. After an orientation period, the prisoner's family may join him, and he selects a house in which they live. Prisoners can . . . work . . . marry . . . one another . . . (or) . . . someone from the non prison population of the island. Prisoners are counted only once a month, the only day on which they must wear the prison uniform. There seems to be no difficulty maintaining a normal, healthy environment, so that Tres Marias is not plagued by the homosexuality and constant violence of American prisons - there are only occasional fights between two men over a woman - and prisoners are not plagued by problems of psychological readjustment after their release.

the van der Hoeven Kliniek in Holland . . . (reports) . . . (prisoners) are divided among 43 prisons, on the basis of sex, age, character and length of sentence, mental problems, type of crime and the prisoners preference (of living accommodations).

These Dutch prisons are low security, community based, and very liberal in their release programs. . . and highly successful compared to ours.

Organizing: Some suggestions of concrete actions.

1) Pressure for specific legal reforms:

- elimination of arrests for minor crimes (draft, drugs, etc.)
- elimination of laws discriminating against ex-convicts.
- bring suits against penal authorities for violations of housing, penal codes, etc.
- etc. (see Bill of Rights).

2) Public education:

- teach-ins.
- set up ex-convicts speaker's bureaus.
- set up public hearings on atrocities in the prisons like the Winter Soldier Tribunal of the VVAW.
- pressure to open prisons to the public (i.e. Citizens' Committees of Inquiry).
- demonstrations.

3) Aid to prisoners, their families, and ex-convicts.

- collect and send scarce and needed items into prisons.
- compile a listing of housing available for ex-convicts.
- students should pressure their schools for courses on the penal system taught by ex-convicts, and scholarships and jobs for ex-cons.
- boycotts of companies (such as cab companies) which refuse to hire people with prison records.

4) Organizational work:

- help form state-wide and national prisoners unions.
- set up communications networks between prisons, and prisons and the outside (i.e. bussing programs for families).

REVIEW BOARDS

Many of the reforms that prisoners demand are already in the statutes. The key, of course, is not what reforms - but how to control and oversee new reforms and those beneficial regulations which already exist. NAM SHOULD PRESSURE FOR CITIZEN AND CONVICT REVIEW BOARDS AT ALL LEVELS OF THE PENAL SYSTEM, AND FOR A PERCENTAGE OF EX-CONVICTS ON PAROLE BOARDS.

Abolish the Criminal INjustice System.

Matt Piers
Chicago, Illinois
September 29, 1971

PROGRAM IN RESPONSE TO NIXON'S NEW ECONOMIC POLICY

by Alice and Staughton Lynd

A month ago Staughton suggested an approach to Nixon's policy, and some specific actions, in a paper entitled "Ideas For Action In Response To Nixon's Policy." This paper was printed in the New University Conference Newsletter and presented at the conference of Southern organizers over Labor Day. Its main points were:

1. Nixon's economic policy is like Johnson's escalation of the war in Vietnam. The government has made itself responsible for preventing inflation and lowering unemployment. It will be difficult for the government to withdraw from this responsibility. Instead, it will become more and more deeply involved.
2. Nixon's policy brings into the open, in a single "package," basic contradictions in American economic life. The policy presents the Left a dramatic opportunity to reach out to our fellow Americans about matters such as the distribution of wealth and income, and to initiate actions which, as the nature of Nixon's policy becomes clear to them, more and more people can join.
3. There is much more criticism of Nixon's economic policy than there was, to begin with, of Johnson's policy in Vietnam. It is not enough to criticize: we must develop a line of argument which distinguishes a radical critique from the criticisms of liberal Democrats. The key point is that Democratic critics propose freezing profits, dividends, and interest, as well as wages and prices, and that this amounts to freezing the existing

distribution of wealth and income.

4. Roughly 70 per cent of the people indicated support for Nixon's policy when it was first announced because they thought it would stop inflation. The price freeze is the one progressive element in Nixon's policy. Despite the fact that wages are "more frozen" than prices, that price increases in steel products, gasoline, imported goods, and automobiles have been permitted to stand and will guarantee further inflation, the concept of a price freeze has wide popular support.

As to action, some of the suggestions made in this paper were:

- time
1. Teach-ins comparable to the teach-ins on Vietnam. These should be held off campus, where possible, for instance in churches or union halls. In contrast to the Vietnam teach-ins, where the manner of presentation was of necessity academic because the questions at issue were at that remote from any one's experience (for instance: what were the provisions of the Geneva Agreements?), in teach-ins on Nixonomics many different kinds of people -- workers, students, housewives, etc. -- should be able to speak from experience about how the Nixon policy affects them.
 2. A people's price freeze. Citizens could go into supermarkets and department stores before the end of the 90 days and demand to see the record of maximum prices between July 15 and August 15 which each seller is supposed to have available for public inspection (Cost of Living Council Order No. 1, Section 8, paragraph A, printed in The Wall Street Journal, August 23, 1971). If prices had risen since August 15, direct action could be initiated to roll them back. If prices had not risen, the record could be preserved and used later when prices do begin to rise, for instance in the Christmas shopping season.
 3. A campaign to raise the Federal income tax exemption. Alice's research has shown that Federal income tax exemptions are lower now than when the tax was first enacted in 1913. At that time, the concept was that the necessities of life should not be taxed. Both Nixon and the Democratically-controlled Ways and Means Committee of the House have offered token increases in the exemption. NAM could campaign for raising the exemption to the amount required for a moderate standard of living, roughly \$10,000 for a family of four. Such a campaign would complement the work of NWHO for a guaranteed annual income of \$6500, and of MCHR for free medical care. Local coalitions between the three organizations could be formed around the slogan: "We have a right to what we need to live."

At this time (October 1) we are still gathering responses and experimenting with parts of this program. Some of the most important concrete responses are these:

1. The New University Conference, in cooperation with the Union of Radical Political Economists, has agreed to encourage its membership to hold teach-ins on Nixonomics beginning the week

of November 15. They are anxious to help find speakers and good materials for the teach-ins. Communications should be addressed to New University Conference, 622 West Diversey, Chicago, Illinois, phone 312 929 3070.

2. The Rank and File Committee of Danville, Illinois, made up of persons from rank-and-file caucuses in unions, a welfare rights group, and a buying club, responded positively to the idea of action to roll back prices. They envisioned forming buying clubs which would operate out of union halls as a first step.
3. Another interesting idea, suggested by Bryant Mitchell of the Danville group, is a petition in shops that no one would work overtime so long as any one was out of work. Miners in Danville used to do this during the Depression.
4. In discussion with NUC staff, it was suggested that a good time for a campaign on prices would be the Christmas buying season, when retailers will undoubtedly succumb to the temptation to raise prices no matter what the official rhetoric or "controls" which exist at that time.
5. In discussion at the Union of Radical Political Economists conference at Morgantown, it was emphasized that a wage freeze and its likely successor -- an incomes policy tying wages to productivity -- not only freeze wages relative to prices and profits, but freeze low wages relative to high wages. Hence an appropriate response to Nixon's policy would be organizing campaigns among low-wage workers, such as hospital employees and clerical workers.
6. Another idea thrown out at the URPE conference was to propose a tax on capital invested out of the United States. This would highlight the thrust of the Nixon program toward overseas economic expansion, and would likely be very popular among American workers who feel their jobs are being exported. Senator Vance Hartke has introduced a bill which proposes to take a step in this direction by abolishing tax breaks for exported goods and capital.
7. Frank Speltz, an organizer in Davenport, Iowa, has suggested that rising tuition represents an "unfrozen price" for students, and that working-class students who pay tuition in increments might respond by putting in escrow that portion of the tuition which had increased since August 15.

Thus there seems no lack of creative tactical ideas. The critical question is whether NAM will make response to Nixon's policy a strategic priority. We urge it to do so. We believe that just as SDS grew after the April 1965 peace march, because people saw it as "the organization which was trying to do something about the war," so NAM can grow as the spearhead of a campaign to respond to Nixonomics. At the same time, in keeping with the principle of organizational modesty, we believe that NAM should undertake only those tasks which existing organizations are not prepared to shoulder, and in this way lay the basis for a working coalition with NUC, NWRG, MCHR, and other groups.

Excerpts from Paul Booth letter to Lerner 8-3-71

Mass Work -- Mass Organization

When NAM projects itself as something other than a cadre-form organization of professional revolutionaries, it leaves vague exactly what it is. For example, some may want NAM to be an organization of organizers, which in reality is only a less-ideological cadre form. But the real alternative to the cadre form is the mass, democratic organization, a membership organization with a relatively formal set of structures. That this is the intention should be spelled out explicitly, for there has only been one other such organization in the whole history of the new left -- SDS when it was a chapter-based organization, before it became a cadre form with collectives supplanting chapters as the key unit. All others, whether of the right or left wings of the new left, have been coordinating committees, cadre forms, etc. Some of these cadre forms have done mass work, others have not; but if NAM is serious about being the mass expression of a mass radical movement numbering in the tens of thousands at least, it should project itself as a democratic, membership organization, based on local membership units, rather than an organization of organizers who happen at this time to be engaged in mass work.

Once that decision has been made, there is a brief agenda of self-defining questions in relation to the other forces currently engaged in mass work the mass arena (I assume that if NAM is a mass arena, the various revolutionary tendencies will have to make up their own minds how to relate to it -- those that choose to participate in it in a non-trotskying way have of course many alternatives open to them).

There are two "sectoral" organizations doing mass work on the new left -- the Medical Committee for Human Rights and the New University Conference. There are a very few mass forms that have not yet been destroyed by the left's suicidal drives: the earlier coordinating committees (possibly including the Mayday outgrowth), and the U. S. National Student Association. Finally there are a few mass-audience publications -- reports, the Guardian, and a whole slew of underground and semi-underground newspapers. Each of these operations deserves consideration from NAM in order not to project duplicating anticompetitive tendencies when they are not such.

Both MCHR and NUC have teetered on the edge of becoming cadre form. MCHR is still ambivalent; while that continues, NAM should yield the health turf to MCHR in terms of mass organizing, taking only the position that it is a key turf and persons interested in working on it should join MCHR. NUC, on the other hand, has resolved now to be a cadre organization creating new forms around the open-up-the-schools perspective, and NAM should join with NUC in alliance, possibly with those mass campus groups being NAM groups or joint groups.

NSA and all the antiwar national groups have, each for its own peculiar reasons, never completely assumed the form of mass organizations. For NSA it was a failure to take advantage of the emergence of the mass student movement by changing its constitutional basis from student governments to a membership student union. Although NSA is an increasingly good reflection of the student movement, the organizational process is distorted and non-representative. Yet that could still be changed; to change it should be a goal of NAM. A purely student union is a good mass-org concept at this time.

The National Peace Action Coalition, the Peoples Coalition for Peace and Justice, and all their predecessors, have been ad hoc coordinating committees due to a convenient marriage of new left anti-organization ideology and old left party fears of uncontrollable new mass-membership organizations. The historical possibility of a mass-membership antiwar organization with radical perspectives has existed for many years, but hasn't come anywhere near to being implemented. If the Mayday tribe creates a national organization, it will also be a paper accomplishment due to the deep anarchist sentiment. These antiwar coalitions have been through too many name changes and reconstituting conventions; instead of working inside them for the perspective of a mass-membership organization of the antiwar movement, let NAM project itself self-confidently as the organizational form that transcends and supersedes these committees.

A decent number of the new left's magazines and newspapers have survived the recent period of disorganization. Those which seek a mass audience and have a multi-tendency political policy are working in a parallel direction to the conceptions of NAM; that parallelism should hopefully be incorporated into affiliations which preserve editorial autonomy but give NAM some published means of reaching out. Those papers with a single-tendency editorial policy should not be affiliated to NAM, nor should NAM try to create its own external organ for the purpose of hawking at rallies. NAM needs an internal newsletter for organizational purposes, but as a multi-tendency organization it shouldn't have an external newspaper.

Trade Union Policy

Labor unions are also mass forms in which NAM as a non-cadre formation will have difficulties in defining an orientation. NAM will include people working in many different unions with the full range of relationships to the union officials. It is not incumbent upon the NAM to have a trade union line or to intervene formally in the internal disputes of labor, although many of NAM's members may engage in that. NAM should have a pro-labor politics which leads it to relate to incomes struggles, public employee struggles, workers' health and safety struggles, etc., in a positive way; but that should be carried on as a community force. Anything more than that is presumptuous, requiring the organization to project itself as an alternative leadership for the labor unions and working class.

NAM should also be clearer about what it is in class terms. As an agency of the new left it will draw on the section of the working class in which college youth have graduated -- primarily the public and professional sectors with a smattering in the rest of the labor force. This allows it to relate more systematically to some particular fights in those arenas.

NAM Electoral Policy

The statement on electoral politics is quite feeble, written as if it were not the case that the creation of a fourth party with both electoral and direct action programs is the concrete alternative to the direct-action-only program NAM projects. But it is the case, and it is developing at a significant rate. As I understand it, the New Party is formally set up in most states; had had a successful national meeting; is in business for serious. Moreover, it makes good sense to have an electoral expression -- every argument for a mass outlook in the NAM document applies with equal force to the development of a New Party. Thus NAM must immediately decide whether to merge with the emerging electoral organization, compete with it for overlapping pieces of the organizing turf, develop some organic relationship, or try to continue to avoid thinking about it.

Inexperience -- the Second Set of Problems

All these years of disorganization have had a tremendously debilitating impact on the self-confidence and competence of the key new left cadre as mass organizers. This great technical incapacity is as important a problem as the ideological blindness the left has been wearing. The first priority for the organization once it exists is an intensive program of schools and training, systematic and coordinated exchanges of knowledge, rapidly grasping with the spottiness of our abilities.

At the same time, extreme care must be exercised in the training and mandating of the field staff. The great need is to offer competence and knowledge from the beginning and to make it genuinely available wherever the staff travels. The menu of possible projects is complete bullshit unless the field staff carrying it can describe the practical work of political organizing, and can relate intelligently to local situation. This will make or break the organization. It is a far higher priority than magazines and conventions.

Internal Questions

If I am to participate in a formal way in NAM and to recruit others to do the same, I shall want to know if the following basic procedures of accountability can be implemented, and why not if not.

- 1) Circulation of major written responses to the document to all members of the NOC and all correspondents.
- 2) Circulation of field-work notes from each travelling staff member, covering each visit, the content of responses, etc.
- 3) Work agenda of the field staff
- 4) Proposed conference agenda of the full regional meetings.
- 5) Projected menus for participants in each regional meeting to find out about the others
- 6) Budget and projected specifics of the publication
- 7) If the publication is not to be a discussion bulletin, provision for having one.
- 8) Organs for accountability of the field staff
- 9) Fund raising prospectus, targets, based on itemized budget of internal expenses.
- 10) Fund raising plan
- 11) Names of convenors or working committees in the following areas:
regional conference planning, budget, editorial (newsletter), document revision
- 12) Summary of responses to the NAM from other left tendencies
- 13) Date and agenda of next NOC meeting
- 14) Staffing provisions for temporary central office.

I think the above would get the thing into a more orderly internal condition, and give it a slight chance of getting off the ground. Let me restate bluntly my grave doubts that it will ever get anywhere unless it both behaves in a politically sensible fashion and in organizationally coherent fashion. After all, if the point is to increase the organizational coherence and good political sense of the left, better start with NAM. If NAM is screwy, irresponsible, vago, imperialistic, or arrogant, it can't help stop the left from being those ways.

Paul